

# DIFFERENCES IN DIPLOMATIC AND MEDIA RHETORIC REGARDING CROATIA'S CONDITIONS FOR SERBIAN EU ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS

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## Abstract

The process of stronger connecting of countries belonging to the Old Continent in the form of the European Union is moving towards the East, which made Serbia start its negotiation process for a full EU membership. The Croatian view on this process is specific and largely based on negative past experience of living together in one country, which ended up in the Homeland War (internationally called Yugoslav war), whose memories are still fresh. Therefore, this process is of great importance for the Croatian politics. Serbian political elites and media advocate for fast accession to the EU, whereas a significant number of Croatian politicians show not only caution and distrust, but to some extent even the fear of this integration. To become a full member state, Serbia must undoubtedly fulfil strong accession criteria. From the beginning of the negotiation process, Croatia started with a rather harsh political rhetoric of setting different conditions and using its recently established right of being an EU member state to force Serbia to compromises in solving still open legal disputes.

The main goal of this paper is to demonstrate by using adequate methods and modern metrics how differences in statements given by various diplomatic-political circles in comparison to specific media announcements may with their varieties and various interpretations generate instability in both countries.

The purpose of this paper is the research and analysis of diplomatic statements and media announcements on this matter in order to gain a better understanding of bilateral relations between two countries and of perception by its citizens - Croatia as the full member state and Serbia as the candidate country.

Results of this research imply the presence of a conflict situation in the negotiation process and a negative turn in geopolitical perception which is of a decreasing probability to solve open issues in bilateral negotiation. The Governments of both countries must raise their efforts in communication to reach valid decisions based on more rational assessment and subsequently inform their public on the discussions in an adequate and correct manner.

**Keywords:** Croatian-Serbian relations, pre-accession negotiation, geopolitical perception, political communications, public relations.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to explain the difference between the diplomatic and media rhetoric communicated by diplomatic-political circles of Croatia and Serbia and how its different interpretations based on who owns the media can contribute to a deterioration of mutual relations on a bilateral level.

In the context of the political relations of Croatia and Serbia on a bilateral level, through an

analysis of the media space and official statements made by institutions from both countries, the authors strived to determine the causes of bad political communication and mutual accusations of political elites for “obstructing” and “abusing” the process of Serbian EU accession negotiations. In this analysis we have specified a clear distinction between diplomatic and media rhetoric.

Under diplomatic rhetoric we mean all official announcements from state institutions and EU in-

stitutions responsible for conducting foreign policy and accession negotiations.

Media rhetoric entails different interpretations of the official announcements from state institutions made by the media, statements and reactions from political actors in both states and statements by representatives of the European Commission. Depending on whose media space a certain information or reaction was published in and its tonality, we categorised the articles according to a scale of favourability: positively, negatively and neutrally.

### **Hypotheses:**

H1: Negative rhetoric of diplomatic-political circles affects the bilateral relations between the two states

H2: Double standards in interpreting historical events and emphasizing topics from the past affect bilateral relations

The methodologies used in this paper are content analysis, discourse analysis, comparative analysis and macrostructural analysis of publications.

## **2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND POLITICAL RHETORIC BETWEEN THE ACTORS**

The process of expansion of the European Union is not and cannot be finished until all countries from south-eastern Europe are admitted to full membership. The great enthusiasm present among the EU political elite after the first enlargement to the countries from the former Eastern Bloc in 2004 slowly waned on the one side due to the slowness and inefficiency of the European administration, and on the other side because of the inconsistency of the political elites in the candidate countries. Since that biggest enlargement, only three more countries became full EU member states, Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, and Croatia in 2013. In this moment Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, Macedonia and Turkey have the status of a confirmed EU membership candidate. Some of them have opened the negotiation process, while others still have to

satisfy additional requirements.

Serbia filed its application for membership in the EU in December 2009, and it gained the status of a candidate in March 2012. The accession negotiations were opened by a European Council Decision in June 2013 [1]. So far in the negotiation process five Intergovernmental Conferences have been held, eight negotiation chapters have been opened and one chapter has been temporarily closed [2].

Resolving open issues and developing good neighbourly relations are a prerequisite for membership because the European Union does not want to get in a position where unresolved bilateral issues between two member states can affect the decision-making process and cause potential conflicts [3].

The effects of polarisation and disagreement in certain topics can be explained by representing convincing arguments which presuppose that people will probably be exposed to them and which speak in favour of their starting position [4].

It is no secret that relations between Croatia and Serbia are strained and burdened with the past and that the level of political communication is very low. Political rhetoric is actually an "instrument of political communication" [5]. The harsh diplomatic-political rhetoric currently present between Zagreb and Belgrade is a direct consequence of communicating through official announcements and of media outings of certain political actors on both sides. Furthermore, the disputes which arose during the defining of negotiation positions for opening Chapter 23, concerning judicial reform, and Chapter 26, concerning culture and education, also have their roots in the past. Problems regarding universal jurisdiction over war crimes committed on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, representation of the Croatian national minority in Serbian institutions, as well as education in the Croatian language in accordance with the Croatian national curriculum are issues which from the Croatian viewpoint are not only of a bilateral character, while the Serbian side holds that it

is possible to resolve them on a bilateral level and that they should not be a burden for Serbia in its accession negotiations with the EU [6].

Croatia made the opening of Chapter 23 conditional upon a guarantee that Serbia will not abuse its law on universal jurisdiction for war crimes trials on the former Yugoslavian territory and upon strengthening the rights of the Croatian national minority in Serbia, as well as full cooperation with the Hague war crimes tribunal. After the formulation highlighting “the need for regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations in processing war crimes, including the goal of avoiding a conflict of jurisdictions” entered the EU’s common negotiation positions, in June 2016 Croatia gave its consent for opening Chapter 23 [7].

Issues regarding the rights of the Croatian national minority for education in the Croatian language in accordance with the Croatian national curriculum which are part of the negotiation positions for Chapter 26 were resolved by Serbia by signing an agreement annex in Belgrade between the Serbian Minister of Education, representative of the Croatian national minority and the Institute of Textbooks of Serbia. The Croatian Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs confirmed in its release from December 2016 that it had no further reservations regarding these issues and that it will have no objections regarding the Chapter during the defining of negotiation positions.

After the disagreements around the accession negotiations were temporarily resolved, the Serbian media space was full of different interpretations and statements made by the political elite about pro-Ustasha sentiment again flourishing in Croatia which continually emphasized the endangering of the rights of the Serbian minority, rehabilitation of Cardinal Stepinac, problems with the Cyrillic alphabet in Vukovar, the “Serbian chocolate” case, etc. On the other side, apart from certain right-wing media, the Croatian media space tries to communicate with the public in a more moderate and calmer way regarding the Croatia-Serbia rela-

tions, even though a harsher reaction from senior government officials is also not uncommon.

Attitudes can change in different ways. As research of cognitive dissonance theory has shown, attitudes change when people behave contrary to their own attitude for a small external award. When this happens, people find a justification for their behaviour, aligning their attitudes with their behaviour [8].

According to a statement made by the Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dačić, Serbia expects from the Croatian government a clearer and more resolute attitude against the relativisation and rehabilitation of crimes against Serbs in World War II, as well as in the conflict during the 1990’s after the dissolution of the former SFRY. He emphasizes that the past can not be changed, but what can be influenced is that the present and the future be better for the people and the countries [9]. This statement also offers a general image of the media and diplomatic-political rhetoric of the Serbian side towards Croatia.

Croatian diplomatic-political circles and the vast majority of media represent the general attitude that Serbia should not be given way in the negotiations and that Serbia must definitely fulfil the negotiation criteria from all Chapters in order to become a member of the European Union. Apart from that, issues relating to bilateral relations with Serbia might be the only topic regarding which there is a consensus among the ruling party, the opposition and the media in Croatia.

There is no progress in the relations between Croatia and Serbia and all the more often certain mini-crises arise among other reasons because of an often reaching for historical topics, especially during election campaigns [10]. Opinions about the interpretation of these topics are deeply divided and will not be brought closer together until both sides start to consider all victims as equal and until they stop having double standards in interpreting historical events. Each side highlights its own victims, and when the question of guilt among their

own rows arises, they try to relativize it. Topics that were current during the conflicts at the beginning of the 1990's are still dominant and they are always emphasized whenever the need for gaining political points arises.

As far as the accession negotiations are concerned, the enlargement policy has always been an opportunity and a legitimate means for all EU member states to set conditions for the negotiation progress of candidate countries and to resolve open bilateral issues with them in that way. For that reason Croatia is very sensitive when it is being called out for making such issues conditional in the accession negotiations with Serbia, since Croatia had similar experiences with Italy and Slovenia. Croatia is not breaking EU's rules in this situation, and if it wants to become a member of the European Union, Serbia must realise that some bilateral issues will be opened up in the access negotiations, be it from Croatia's side or some other member state.

The European Union must also act because the "mere expressing and reshaping of ideas can only increase a move towards a more extreme viewpoint" [11].

The relations between Croatia and Serbia will not change for the better even in the future because their open issues are not classical bilateral issues and the help of a third party might be necessary for their resolution.

### 3. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DIPLOMATIC AND MEDIA RHETORIC

The establishment of diplomatic relations is considered the first step in official relations between two states. According to Article 2 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, these relations are established based on mutual consent of the related states [12].

The signing of the Agreement on Normalisation of Relations Between the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on August 23rd 1996 opened the path for establishing diplomatic relations between the two states which shortly be-

fore that were still at war. In an official exchange of diplomatic notes on establishing diplomatic relations on September 9th 1996, the Republic of Croatia and FR Yugoslavia accepted the obligations arising from the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and the norms of international law.

Since then these relations have been at different levels, among other things because of fresh memories from the war period. According to Berković, there is no exact breakdown and definition of relations between states, but international practice has crystallised certain titles for specific types of these relations, which imply a certain type of relationship towards their nature and structure, ranging from the most friendly to tense. Therefore, according to international practice, relations between states are divided into the following: allied, good-neighbourly, cordial, friendly, good, fair, indifferent, cold, tense, *de facto* relations, suspended and terminated [13].

The way of diplomatic communication also depends upon the state of relations between two countries. The usual procedure is that the state, i.e. its ministry of foreign affairs, refers its messages and corresponds through its diplomatic representation in the other country [13]. Both the president and the prime minister of the country communicate in this way. Nevertheless, we can grasp the complete picture of the relations between two states from the diplomatic and media rhetoric in both states.

By diplomatic rhetoric we mean all official announcements from state institutions and institutions of the European Union responsible for conducting foreign affairs and accession negotiations.

Media rhetoric entails different interpretations of the official announcements from state institutions made by the media, the statements and reactions of political actors in both states and statements made by representatives of the European Commission.

By analysing both segments we reached the conclusion that both diplomatic and media rhetoric are closely connected because by listening to

public opinion the political elites in their public statements for the media, as well as institutions in their communication with the public, form messages they want to present to the public.

Values are closely related to beliefs, but they also contain components of the ideal. While beliefs reflect that which we think is true, values reflect that which we would like to become true, even if it is not true currently [14].

According to [15], the development of mass communication has enabled news to spread quickly, but a newspaper comment or analysis of a certain event in the relations between two states can not replace a structured diplomatic report composed by a good diplomat working in the field. Apart from that, newspaper reports and analyses often reinterpret statements made by officials of a certain state in a sensationalist manner and draw things out of context, so that the public gets the impression that two states have a problem. Sometimes this may be correct, but sometimes it is nowhere near the truth.

Cottam [14] assume that people process political information received through different information channels in the following order: the information is received and a certain node or brain scheme is adjusted, then it is compared with the knowledge structure and appropriate existing nodes and saved in the memory. Finally, when an individual has to make a decision about political action, this evaluation of an attitude actually comes from the individual's memory.

Media rhetoric in certain states also serves political actors for the construction of political image. Be it through the election process or making a decision which can cause certain reactions in the public, politicians and officials are very careful how and in what way they will communicate with the media. The bond between politicians and media is unbreakable because communication on that level flows every day in both directions. The publishing of a president or prime minister's official positions, as well as those of leaders of certain state instituti-

ons, is usually formed into official announcements, but these same leaders are often called upon to comment on direct journalists' questions even outside of official press conferences.

According to the Yale approach to changing a position, the persuasiveness of a message is dependant on aspects of the sources of a message, aspects of the message itself, i.e. its content, and aspects of the audience [8]. This segment illustrates how important such public appearances are, because if a politician is eloquent, informed and has controlled communication towards the wider public, his or her messages and positions will surely be heard.

Although it was originally thought that the increase in the offer of information will increase the informedness of the target public, the actual result is completely opposite, since the quantity of placed information is too big for the recipient to be able to process it [16].

Media rhetoric in Croatia and Serbia functions in a similar way, only in this case the messages trying to be presented in the public in both countries are burdened with open issues in bilateral relations. Politicians' reactions to different events are on both sides interpreted in support of petty daily political needs because neither side wants to leave an impression of leniency in its public, regardless of the fact that reducing tensions in statements given by official representatives of both states would perhaps create prerequisites for bringing closer their positions in open issues and possibly an improvement of relations.

In this case we can correlate with group discussions in social psychology where they lead to certain group members focusing on the group, in this case the media, and instead of perceiving the average public opinion, they often perceive that the public opinion is much more extreme than the one presented in the media [17,18].

In the past year we have witnessed a real war with official communication and exchange of protest notes, and the media followed it in a quite biased manner.



A protest note is a note, regardless of what form of note it is, which is used to express a protest, complaint or dissatisfaction regarding a position, issue or violation of a certain right, for which, according to the sender's opinion, the recipient of the note is responsible. In so doing it does not have to be explicitly stated that the note in question is a protest note, but this can be discerned from its meaning and the goal of its content [13].

The root of these problems lies in the unresolved problems from the past, and they culminated when Serbia accused Croatia that it is blocking the opening of certain chapters in the accession negotiations as a member of the European Union because it feels that bilateral issues should be resolved outside this frame.

If we wanted to categorise the degree of current relations between Croatia and Serbia according to international practice, then we would certainly describe them as fair, since, as Svjetlan Berković writes in his book *Diplomacy and the diplomatic profession*, "fair (normal) relations are diplomatic relations between states based on respecting international law and customs, as well as the usual courteous practice in the international community, with the subjects' readiness to resolve their disputes peacefully" [13].

The problems in the relations between Croatia and Serbia could be resolved quickly with a bit of political will to clearly define the initial meeting at the top and set its clear agenda. This would entail that each state prepares memoranda in which they define the open issues and problems they feel are unresolved and which would be agreed upon before a meeting at the level of Prime Minister.

A memorandum is a type of diplomatic letter containing an overview of certain facts, opinions or requests, in which a certain position which is important, but often contentious, in interstate relations is succinctly but thoroughly presented and proven [13].

After the exchange of the memoranda it would be most desirable to present the positions and require-

ments of the opposite side to the domestic public and start a public debate. The results of the public debate would be a guidepost for the political elites on how to realise their interests, resolve the open issues and improve the relations between the two states.

According to [19], the maximum efficiency of a state in realising the goals of its foreign policy requires feedback from the total flow of information which actually represents the theory of cybernetics in the full sense of the word.

The different diplomatic and media rhetoric in both media spaces contributes significantly to public views in both states. These views are based on a different perception of open issues, where the public is constantly presented with the idea that the disagreements are connected to historical events and that history is repeating itself. However, even though neither state shows signs that the official policy is heading towards a new war conflict, topics burdened with the past and daily patronising from both sides through the media earns the actors political points on the domestic political scene, so an improvement of relations and resolving of open issues should not be expected any time soon.

This confirms that diplomatic-political rhetoric significantly contributes to poor bilateral relations between two states, which makes our first hypothesis completely correct.

Media rhetoric with its interpretations of statements made by political actors and publishing of "bombastic news", as well as drawing of topics from the past significantly affects the creation of negative views in the public of both sides on the open issues between the two states, which also completely confirms our second hypothesis.

## 4. RESULTS

For the purpose of writing this paper, the authors analysed 59 publications of diplomatic rhetoric and 289 publications of media rhetoric.

The diplomatic rhetoric publications were obtained from official sources of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of

Croatia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia and official announcements from the European Commission. Publications related to media rhetoric were followed on Internet mass media of media houses in Croatia – Styria Media Group, EPH/HanzaMedia, Nacional News Corporation and Telegram Media Group; media houses in Serbia – Adria Media Group, Ringier Axel Springer, Politika newspaper and magazines, and European

publishers Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Süddeutsche Zeitung Digitale Medien, The Independent, BBC News, Guardian Europe, CNN/Europe and EU Observer.

The period of following all publications related to the subject and analysis lasted from June 2015 to January 2017.

The sampling of results is defined by the order of publications and interpretations (Figure 1).

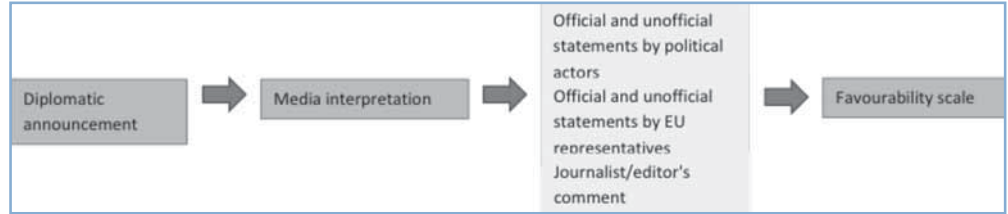


Figure 1. Sampling results. Source: authors' work.

Diplomatic publications from official sources are subject to different media interpretations. Media interpretations are classified on a scale of three modes of reporting news, i.e. the official and unofficial statements by political actors, official and unofficial statements by representatives of the European Union and the European Commission and comments by journalists or editors. All publications were then classified in a tonal scale of favourability with their full content, i.e. superscript headline, headline, subhea-

ding, leads and the text itself.

The mode of rating the publications was designed according to a tonal scale of favourability in proportions of -1, 0 and 1, where -1 defines a publication negatively inclined towards the opposite side, 0 defines a neutral diplomatic publication and a neutral publication reported in a media interpretation, and 1 defines a positive inclination towards the opposite side (Table 1, Table 2).

Table 1. Diplomatic rhetoric and text favourability tone by region. Source: authors' work.

Diplomatic rhetoric / country	favourability			total
	-1	0	1	
Croatia	6	13	0	19
Serbia	9	22	0	31
EU	0	9	0	0
total				59

Table 2. Media rhetoric and text favourability tone by region. Source: authors' work.

Media rhetoric / country	favourability			total
	-1	0	1	
Croatia	103	0	17	120
Serbia	117	0	20	137
EU	0	32	0	32
total				289

The analysis of 59 publications of diplomatic rhetoric suggests that not even diplomatic publications were in a certain proportion of a neutral tone towards the opposite side. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia published 31 diplomatic releases in total. These publications were negatively connoted in 29% of the cases and ne-

utrally in 71%. The Croatian Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs published 19 official releases in the same period, of which 31% were negatively connoted and 69% neutrally. The official releases from the European Commission were neutral in 100% of the cases, and in total there were 9 official publications on the topic (Figure 2).

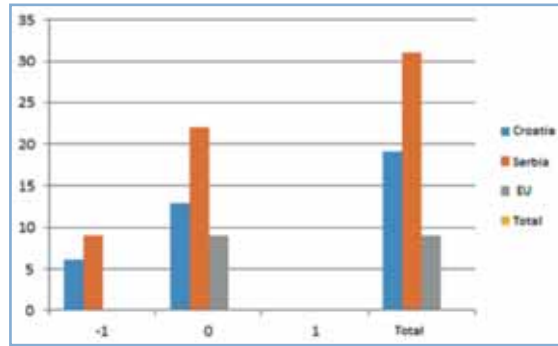


Figure 2. Analysis of the favourability scale tonality of the diplomatic rhetoric results. Source: authors' work.

In media publications 289 articles were analysed which contained reports of news from diplomatic publications in media interpretations of news reports explained in the sampling of results (Figure 1). In the period in question the Serbian media published 137 articles in total with interpretations of diplomatic publications, of which 85% were negatively connoted towards the opposite side and 25% were positively connoted. In the analysed period Croatia published 120 articles,

and in reports of the diplomatic news 85% of them were also reported with negative connotations and 25% with positive connotations regarding the opposite side. In both countries there were no neutrally connoted reports of diplomatic news. European media were always neutral in their publications and they reported news or interpreted them in their original tone. They published 32 news concerning the topic in question (Figure 3).

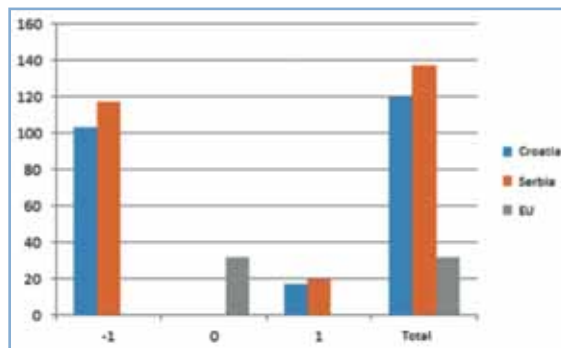


Figure 3. Analysis of the favourability scale tonality of the media rhetoric results. Source: authors' work.



## 5. CONCLUSION

The position of the European Union that bilateral issues are not and can not be part of the accession negotiations between

Serbia and the EU is clear. The position of the European Commission is unique here, so all press releases, statements given by the Commission's officials, as well as statements from member states officials are in concordance with this position. Although it has never been clearly defined which of the bilateral issues could overlap with the issues of certain chapters of accession negotiations, the European Commission is unrelenting in its position.

The general position of Croatian policy is that Serbia must fulfil all requirements set before it in the accession negotiations and adjust its legislation well to the European legislation. Thereby Croatia insists that some of the open issues between the two states are contained in the accession negotiation chapters. By setting conditions for opening certain chapters Croatia has faced negative reactions from the European Commission and turbulent reactions of the Serbian political elite and the Serbian media space. This is also probably the only issue in Croatia with a national consensus of all political and media factors.

By returning to the rhetoric from the 1990's and emphasizing topics from the past, Serbia is trying to diminish Croatia's position in its public and to prepare the public that it will have to fulfil all requirements set before the country during the accession negotiations with the European Union.

The political elite in Serbia is aware that the toughest challenges are yet to come, so it is trying to represent the Serbian government's firm position towards Croatia and its "blockade" in the negotiations with a sharper diplomatic-political and media rhetoric.

The official Croatian policy supports Serbia on its European path and reserves the right to show its reservation in the accession negotiations regarding the open issues between the two countries. Croatia also offers its help and experience gained while it itself was in the process of accession negotiations.

The official Serbian policy expects that the European Union does not allow Serbia to be "humiliated" and that certain states, especially Croatia, does not include open issues which can be dealt with bilaterally in the negotiations. In doing so, Serbia is of course aware that the negotiations are not going to be easy, but that it will act in good faith that all problems set before it can be resolved.

The positions of both states are based on a different perception of open issues, where the public is constantly presented with the idea that the disagreements are connected to historical events and that history is repeating itself. However, even though neither state shows signs that the official policy is heading towards a new war conflict, topics burdened with the past and daily accusations made through the media will not lead to an improvement of relations and resolution of open issues any time soon.

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## RAZLIKE U DIPLOMATSKOJ I MEDIJSKOJ RETORICI O HRVATSKOM UVJETOVANJU PRISTUPNIH PREGOVORA SRBIJE ZA ČLANSTVU EU

### Sažetak

Proces čvršćeg povezivanja zemalja Starog kontinenta u obliku Europske Unije širi se prema istoku. U tom je kontekstu i Srbija započela svoje pretpristupne pregovore za članstvo. Hrvatski odnos prema tom procesu ima svoje specifičnosti koje se temelje na negativnom iskustvu zajedničkog življenja u bivšoj državi te svježih sjećanja na patnje i žrtve domovinskog rata. Iz tog je razloga za hrvatsku politiku ovaj process od iznimne važnosti. Srpske političke elite i medijski krugovi zagovaraju što brži pristup Europskoj Uniji dok s druge strane kod znatnog dijela hrvatskih političara prevladava uvjerenje da kroz pretpristupne pregovore moraju riješiti sa Srbijom i neka bilateralna pitanja. Pitanja kao što su univerzalna jurisdikcija nad počinjenim ratnim zločinima na području bivše Jugoslavije, prava hrvatske nacionalne manjine na političku zastupljenost u institucijama Srbije kao i školovanje na hrvatskom jeziku i u skladu sa hrvatskim nacionalnim kurikulumom, neka su od najbitnijih. Bez sumnje je da Srbija za ulazak u Europsku Uniju mora ispuniti stroge kriterije pristupanja. Međutim, oštra retorika s obje strane i negativne reakcije na svaki prijedlog jedne ili druge strane ne doprinosi razvoju bilateralnih odnosa. Hrvatska je svojim prijedlozima mjerila za otvaranje pojedinih poglavlja naišla na neodobravanje čak i Europske komisije koja ima stav da se bilateralna pitanja ne uključuju u pregovore. Srpska politička elita optužuje Hrvatsku da pokušava zlorabiti process pregovora za ostvarivanje svojih ciljeva, a Hrvatska s druge strane inzistira na ispunjavanju svih obaveza postavljenih pred Srbiju. Rješenje ovih problema leži isključivo u dijalogu između Vlada Hrvatske i Srbije, ali i umjerenoj retorici cjelokupne javnosti i medija u obje zemlje. Cilj rada je ukazati kako razlike u izjavama iz diplomatsko-političkih krugova u odnosu na objave posljedično generirane kao medijske plasmane pojedinih medija mogu svojim varijetetima i različitim interpretacijama generirati nestabilnost u obje zemlje. Svrha ovog rada je istraživanje i analiza diplomatskih izjava i medijskih sadržaja o predmetnoj problematici za bolje razumijevanje bilateralnih odnosa dviju zemalja i precepcije njihovih građana – Hrvatske kao članice Europske Unije i Srbije kao kandidatkinje. Rezultati istraživanja ukazuju na postojanje konfliktne situacije u pristupnim pregovorima te negativnog zaokreta u geopolitičkoj percepciji. To utječe na smanjenje vjerojatnosti rješavanja otvorenim pitanjima bilateralnim pregovorima. Vlade obje zemlje moraju povećati komunikacijske napore kako bi na osnovi racionalnije procjene cjelokupne situacije mogle donijeti pravovaljane odluke i o istima na adekvatan način obavještavati svoje ciljne javnosti.

**Ključne riječi:** hrvatsko-srpski odnosi, pristupni pregovori, geopolitička percepcija.